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## A Note from the Conference Minister

### A Thanksgiving Reflection

Dear Friends,

In this season of thanksgiving, my mind has turned to the Chinese benediction, "may you live in interesting times". These are interesting times as our nation struggles to emerge from a deep economic recession, a recession that has exacted a great cost in human suffering, as people lose homes and jobs, children go hungry, schools are increasingly overcrowded, and much more. These times have challenged our churches, some of which have seen giving drop, and the growing need for ministry in the face of human crisis. Sometimes the sense of scarcity of this season casts a shadow on the abundance with which we are blessed. In this season, yes, I am deeply grateful of those essential parts of my life; my family, the joy of serving my call to ministry, friends from across the years and places, yes.

However, in this letter I would lift up another part of the abundance that pours from the hand of God. In a word that is you... you, the people and the churches of the Southeast Conference. We knew as we worked on the Conference budget for the year 2009 that these would be challenging times, and we planned accordingly. But through the year I have seen our churches put the mission of the United Church of Christ first time after time. Yesterday I received a call congratulating me that this Conference had given the biggest increase in One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) of UCC conferences in 2009. That same call thanked me for the particular generosity of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN, for having the highest per capita giving to OGHS of all churches in the UCC. The giving to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Basic Support, which was at an historical high in 2008, remains as strong in 2009. The Friends of the Conference effort inviting individual giving to OCWM and other ministries of the Conference has brought a generous response from you. The first returns of pledges from leaders to the Campaign to Expand the Ministry and Mission of the Conference have been extraordinarily. The churches and people of the Conference have been generous not only with dollars, but with time and commitment.

In the end, this is not about money, but about a vision, a vision of another kind of world, place where there is no ambiguity about the "all" when we say "all are invited", where the love of God is lived, and the spirit of justice to which Christ calls us is honored. May we together be worthy of So, thank you for all that you do to build our beloved church.

Peace,  
Tim Downs



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## Featured Highlight

### SEC A Critical Partner in Formation of the Center Progressive Renewal



In a bold and courageous step to strengthen leadership development in the United Church of Christ, the Southeast Conference is proud to partner with Local Church Ministries (LCM) and Hope For Peace and Justice (H4PJ) to announce the creation of the Center of Progressive Renewal (CPR) based in Atlanta in the Southeast Conference office. The Center for Progressive Renewal is a non-profit organization whose primary mission is to train leaders to start and grow the 21st century Progressive Church.

The Southeast Conference is a valued partner in the formation of the Center for Progressive Renewal, giving one of our staff, Rev. Cameron Trimble, to serve as the President and Co-Director of CPR. In recent years, the Southeast Conference has found that having partners in the national setting of the United Church of Christ, in its seminaries, in churches, and among other conferences, as well as ecumenical partners who share our passion for a Gospel can strengthen our vital witness in the South. "The Center's formation provides us an opportunity to gather these partners to build churches and to identify and equip leaders for a future of great hope," says Tim Downs, Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference.

The Center for Progressive Renewal will work with the staff of the Southeast Conference and other conferences to plant new UCC churches as well as revitalizing our existing churches. By focusing on leadership development, CPR will strive to raise the standards of leadership in our lay leaders and clergy through practical training in church growth and development. "This center can be a bridge between where we are and where we're going as a denomination," said LCM's executive minister, the Rev. Steve Sterner. "Affiliated with the UCC but open to partnerships with other progressive churches, the center can give us the structural flexibility we need to adapt to opportunities for church growth in a rapidly changing culture."

The new Center will serve existing and future UCC congregations but will be organized as an independent non-profit agency. "This is a new model for sustainable church growth and church revival in a reality of diminishing financial resources," says the Rev. David Schoen, leader of LCM's Congregational Vitality and Discipleship Ministry Team. "It gives us the means to build partnerships with other denominations and to seek financing from foundations that normally would not fund a denominational office."

"The Center aims to equip congregations and clergy with the best practices for reversing membership decline," Trimble told the partners. "Every week we close three churches in the UCC, and every week we plant 0.7 new churches—and of the latter I can't tell you how many will survive. It's easy to do the math. I know you and I love this church too much to allow membership decline become an irreversible trend. We'll be drawing on the skills of the best ecumenical practitioners in church development and renewal who can serve as a pool of consultants and coaches for the denomination," Trimble told the board. "Our ambition is to become the Alban Institute for new church development. At present there is no ecumenical center serving the development of new congregations in progressive denominations. This is a vacuum we aim to fill."

Replacing the model of a centralized denominational agency planting new congregations, the Center "will return to a proven strategy: that healthy congregations give birth to new congregations," Trimble said. "When we conducted autopsies of 50 failed new church starts, we discovered that in each



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case they lacked an external support system. But the success rate increases when denominations aggressively practice 'church multiplication' with existing congregations as the starting point.

"We need to be building church-birthing partnerships with the UCC's best asset: its local congregations," Trimble said. The Center will focus on these goals:

- \* Increase the number of new churches planted in critical regions, especially regions of the country with the highest population growth rates.
- \* Increase the number of trained, competent new church developers and revitalizing pastors in the UCC.
- \* Build a seminary-based training program that prepares current and future clergy to plant new congregations or renew existing churches.
- \* Strengthen the commitment of conference staff to support new church development.
- \* Develop models for vocational placement, internships, partnerships and other creative approaches to support new church leaders and congregations that are planning new churches.

"The Progressive Renewal Team is committed to first-rate execution and outcomes," said Trimble. "We deeply value measurable results and commit to providing the United Church of Christ with the best possible services available to mainline denominations. We understand that this is a significant decision and investment on the part of all of our partners. With that in mind, we will deliver unquestionable quality and results, and we are willing to be held accountable for reaching our mutual goals."

The Center's website at [www.progressiverenewal.org](http://www.progressiverenewal.org) defines "progressive Christianity" as "a faith that believes God's family includes all people... a faith for which millions of Americans hunger."

According to the website, progressive Christians accept that "God's people are responsible for caring for the environment, the poor, sick and vulnerable; that education, healthcare and civil liberties are vital to abundant life and therefore the desire of God for all people; and that truth is found more often in honest grappling with the questions than in absolute hierarchical pronouncement of the answers."

The Rev. R. Joaquin Willis, the LCM board's vice-chair and pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Miami, said he believes the new Center will "focus on what it takes to get new congregations off the ground."

"I was a new church pastor 20 years ago, and I know the pressures a church planter faces," Willis said. "I hope this Center will help the UCC learn and apply the best ecumenical practices for church development."

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## Around the Conference



Three Atlanta area UCC churches were represented at the Pride Parade October 31st, **Kirkwood UCC, Central Congregational UCC, and Virginia-Highland Church**. **Chris Glaser**, interim minister of Virginia-Highland also served as parade marshal.

**Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN**, reported that they assembled and shipped nine clean up buckets for disaster relief, and **Holy Trinity Community UCC** reported that they had sent eight. These buckets are valued at \$60 each. Are there other congregations that have sent clean-up buckets in? Let us know by contacting Connie and Bob Waidmann at [cbwaidphtn@frontiernet.net](mailto:cbwaidphtn@frontiernet.net).

Eight women from the Women's Ministry of **Community Congregational UCC**, Montgomery, Alabama participated in the Women's Fall Retreat, October 2-4, held in Wetumpka, AL sponsored by the Christian Women's Fellowship of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. The theme for this event was **"Knowing and Being Known: Deepening Your Connection with God"**. Rev. Diane Wood, Pastor of Village Christian Church in Auburn, AL, and Director of the Young Adult Ministries for the Region, served as resource leader and Keynote Speaker. Attending this event were **Dorinda Broadnax, Cheryl Jarman, Miriam Perry, Velinda Perry, Mollie Reed, Cynthia Stinson, and Pamela Thornton**. The Region gave three scholarships to these UCC women. This is a part of a continuing effort to promote ecumenical collaboration in programming among the UCC and DOC.

**Randy Hammer**, the UCC pastor of United Church of Oakridge, TN, a community church, has let us know that he and five other members of the United Church will join about 18 members of the First United Methodist Church of Oak Ridge in a medical mission trip to Nicaragua October 24-November 1. He notes that he will be wearing his UCC shirts and representing the UCC as a part of the trip. The group will be providing medical and dental care, vision tests and dispensing supplies.

**Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga** celebrated its 50th anniversary, September 27th. Former pastor David Beebe spoke for the event, and reminded Pilgrim of it's a unique role in Chattanooga as a liberal inclusive church. Beebe reminded the church that "the broad issues today are how to be faithful to Jesus, in justice issues, in care for this planet, in laboring for peace, in remembering that the God who came in Jesus Christ loves the whole world and walks among us."

Posted on November 23, 2009



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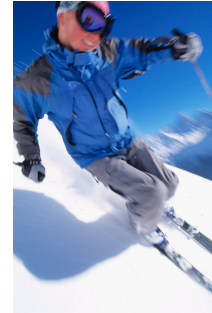
## Conference News and Announcements

### Annual Youth Winter Retreat: Peacemakers: The Green Theme

WHEN: January 15-18, 2010

For all Youth ages **6th grade** through **12th grade** in the Southern **and** the Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ - we invite you to **REGISTER** for this amazing event!

Last year at the Annual Winter Youth Retreat at the Blowing Rock Conference Center 150 youth and adults from the Southern and Southeast Conferences gathered together to take a close look at the meaning of violence in the form of poverty and hunger and to understand how we as individuals and communities participate in creating and healing poverty and hunger.



Violence still lurks...so the conversation continues. This year we continue our theme of violence and this year we are exploring violence as it demeans our world and uses up our natural resources.

Come join youth from the Southern and Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ as we continue to understand how to be peacemakers. *Peacemakers: The Green Theme* will focus on our daily consumption practices that consume, spend and care for our earth and our God given resources. Together as a community of Christ we will explore the ways in which we can be instruments of God's peace in our own communities.

This Winter Retreat is a perfect opportunity for youth groups to bond, to meet UCC youth from other churches and other states and to have a day of fun in the snow. This retreat is designed for youth to stretch their spiritual muscles and to have fun meeting new friends and learning from other youth. The weekend will provide opportunity for creating new friendships, enjoying the snow, getting some exercise, eating fabulous food, spiritual growth and life changing conversation. The Rev. Da Vita D. McCallister will be our session leader and will facilitate our time around being *Peacemakers: The Green Theme*. There is something here for everyone.

Included in this packet you will find one registration form for youth and adults. Please make copies of these forms for every participant to complete. In order to register your church group, please mail back a completed form for each youth and adult member of your group along with your payment in full. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [kristingvaughn@gmail.com](mailto:kristingvaughn@gmail.com) or call me at 336-402-2897.

**CLICK HERE** to download the registration form.

Peace,

Rev. Kristin Gerner Vaughn  
Blowing Rock Conference Center  
Annual Winter Youth Retreat  
Planning Committee Chair

### October 24th Board of Directors Meeting Summary

- The Board reviewed a preliminary budget for 2010 which reflects a



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- continued commitment to maintain program and staffing at current levels.
- **Cameron Trimble** reported on the development of a **Center for Progressive Renewal** to be located in the Conference offices in which the Southeast Conference is a partner.
  - **Chris Waldron** was called by the Board to serve as the new church developer for **Praxis UCC**, a new church start in Atlanta.
  - The Board reviewed the plans for a rebuilding of the conference web site to be completed by December 31st, and continued development of the Leaders' Link as a primary communication tool.
  - **Kathy Clark** reported on the continued expansion of the TAP program, as well as a transition in her work to equip people for ministry more broadly understood than simply the TAP program. She also reported on progress in bringing TAP more fully on line.
  - Tim reported on the upcoming changes in staff and job descriptions as well as other developments in information technologies for the Conference.
  - We continue to cultivate churches seeking affiliation in the Atlanta area and Alabama
  - The **2010 Annual Meeting of the Conference** will be hosted by **Church of the Savior UCC in Knoxville, TN.**
  - **Bette Thomas** reported on the UCC Southern Region Conference Ministers and Leaders meeting in Tampa, September 14th. She noted that there was not much in the way of constructive ways for conferences to engage, but that as a first step it was good to get acquainted with the issues and leadership of other conferences.
  - The Board voted to endorse the participation of the Conference as a partner in the Center for Progressive Renewal, which will be housed in the Conference offices in Atlanta.

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### Organization of the Southeast Conference History Project

**Michael Stroud** of **United Church UCC, Huntsville** is currently doing extensive research into the history of the Southeast Conference in preparation for writing a history of the Conference to be published in time for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Conference in 2016. He has asked the Board of Directors to organize a History Project Task Force of people who have an interest in the history of the UCC and its predecessor bodies in the South. Please contact Tim Downs at [tdowns@secucc.org](mailto:tdowns@secucc.org) if you would like to be considered for nomination to the Task Force.

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### Annual Report of Christian Hospital Mungeli 2008-2009

Dr. Anil Henry is a missionary partner with the Southeast Conference, UCC. We are pleased to present his update report.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the entire report.

**Out-patient Services:** The numbers in the outpatient just keep on going. I think it has to do with the fact that we are in India where the Population is also growing each day. But also there may be other factors involved.

Our wild life in the OPD region has increased as from the already added aquariums that were fascinating for the village children; we now have a large aviary that the Atlanta group inaugurated this winter. There are about 60 birds in it and it is right in-front of the Operation theatre and a great joy for everyone to see. There is also a second water fall that is designed and full of colourful fish, nothing close to what people of this have experienced. Our skill with the gastroscope has surely increased as we are now performing more sclerotherapies for bleeding and elective varices. The scope has also been of great use in working with cases of tracheal stenosis and even pulling out a foreign body. We hope that we can get a bronchoscope to do that sometime which will make the task easier.

**In-Patient Services:** We are a 80 bed hospital which has a bed occupancy of 83.2 percent. It has been a relatively busy year with numbers of inpatients going up.

It is still interesting to see that the average hospital stay of a patient is 7.27 days. This is because of two reasons: 1. Patients come from villages which are difficult to reach and so they want all the work done and sutures removed before they

leave. 2. The cost for staying in hospital is relatively much cheaper than any other setting in a city or the western world.

We are ever so thankful to move into one of the new renovated wards and next we inaugurated the new surgical ICU/Recovery room, Delivery Room and Casualty.

We now have a total of 16 ICU beds, 8 in the medical ICU, 7 in the surgical ICU and a isolation bed/treatment room which we have already been able to use and save a very sick tetanus patient.

We also realized that the ICU facilities are highly used and so the moment we had the surgical ICU built, we immediately renovated the medical ICU which had been heavily overused for the past four years. All these areas are now air-conditioned and with the help of monitors for each bed, ventilators and also a syringe pump we feel that we are getting closer to managing the more difficult patients. One patient of course, was Mom who was in the ICU for about two weeks.

We also have a new nursery which has eight beds and this too is a great service as there is nothing like it anywhere around.

We are now almost finished with redoing and renovating the ground floor of the ward. This was the only space that was accessible to me when I joined here six years ago. After this, we will be working on the first floor with new flooring and tiles on the wall to make things look good and clean.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the entire report.

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### Georgia-South Carolina Association In Care Committee Meets October 31

The Georgia-South Carolina In Care Committee met October 31st and in addition to hearing updates from each of the students in care, acted to recommend the renewal of the in care status of the following people: **Charmaine Johnson, Victory Church**, Stone Mountain, **Leslie Raymer, Virginia-Highland Church**, Atlanta, **John and Rebecca Shillingburg, Church of the Savior**, Roswell, **Michelle Calderon, Central Congregational UCC**, Atlanta, **Ronnie Galvin and Terri Lawrence of First Congregational UCC**, Atlanta, **Carolyn Hayford, and Elizabeth Lorick of Circular Congregational UCC**, Charleston, and **Karen Mann and David Sigmund of Kirkwood UCC**, Atlanta.

Further, they are recommending that student in care status be limited to no more than five years until a person appears before an ecclesiastical council, and that if they are found to be ordainable pending a call, they can continue for up to three more years. After that they would need to request a renewal of their status.

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### East Alabama-West Georgia Association Holds Annual Meeting October 10th



**The East Alabama-West Georgia Association** held its Annual Meeting October 10th at **Oak Grove Congregational Christian Church in Pine Mountain, GA**. Associate Conference Minister Kathy Clark introduced the new direction to authorizing ministry in the United Church of Christ, Multiple Paths to Ministry. The associate renewed the licenses for ministry of **Rip Hardman, Hugh Hogan and Jim Johnson**. **Don Harmon, of Lanett Congregational Christian Church** continues as moderator and treasurer of the association, **Betty Moon of Sandy Creek UCC**, as secretary. Committee chairs remained unchanged.

*Posted on November 23, 2009*

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## Lifting Up!

We are deeply saddened by the death of **Jason Powell**, 33, a student in care of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, a member of **Rush Memorial UCC**, Atlanta, and in his last year of studies at The Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, died suddenly as a result of a blood clot, October 29th. Jason was a recipient of a Southeast Conference Theological Scholarship for 2009-2010. He is survived by his family and his wife of six years, Anitra.

Frank Warren, the father of **Tom Warren**, pastor of **Pleasant Hill Community UCC**, TN, died on October 28th. The funeral was held in North Carolina the following week.

**Dorinda Broadnax**, licensed for ministry at **Community Congregational UCC**, Montgomery, AL, is in ongoing physical therapy as she recovers from an auto accident, October 7th in which her car was totaled.

**Tom Ingham**, member of **Circular Congregational UCC**, Charleston, SC died in October following an extended struggle with cancer. Tom was a retired UCC intentional interim minister, and husband to **Sue Ingham**. Sue recently retired as Iowa Conference Minister to be with family in Charleston.

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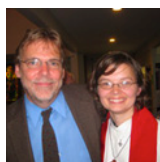
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## Celebrate!



A service of ordination for **Rachel Small**, in care of the Georgia-South Carolina Association was held November 8th at **Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta**. She is a member of Pilgrimage UCC, and has been called to be Minister for Youth and Christian Education at Scarsdale Congregational UCC, NY.



**Chrissy Cataldo**, in care of the Alabama-Tennessee Association, and member of **Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville, TN** was ordained in a service held there October 4th. Chrissy has been called to a ministry with hospice in Bloomington, IN.



**Andy Sidden and Candace Chellew**, pastor and associate pastor of Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC, are pioneers in a new path of discernment leading to ordained ministry in the United Church of Christ, without having to complete an M.Div. degree. For the last three years they have worked on developing a portfolio organized around the four marks of effective and

faithful ministry; Spiritual Formation, UCC Identity, Personal and Professional Formation, and Knowledge and Skills. They have submitted those portfolios to the Church and Ministry Committee of the Georgia South Carolina Association. Both Andy and Candace worked closely with Conference staff, Kathy Clark and Tim Downs. Conference Minister Tim Downs noted upon reviewing their respective portfolios "both Andy and Candace as candidates for ordained has demonstrated a high level of giftedness for ministry that is evidenced in their experience as well as education, and I have every confidence that this is just the first step of training and credentialing ministers who will serve the needs of our congregations faithfully and well".

**Michael Pater** was installed as the 22nd minister of **Central Congregational UCC**, October 11th. Preaching for the occasion was **Steve Sterner**, Executive Minister of Local Church Ministries of the UCC.

**Paige Pearson**, pastor of **United Church UCC of Cookeville, TN** and her husband **Knox**, are the proud parents of **Gracianna Marie Wimberly**, born October 13th, weighing 8 lbs. 7 ozs. **Helen Pearson Smith**, retired UCC minister and dean of Candler School of Theology is the proud grandmother.

**Becky Nelson**, a member of **Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta**, and in her first year at Candler School of Theology has been received as a student in care of the Georgia-South Carolina Association.

**Alan Roof**, chaplain at Shepherd Center, Atlanta, and member of **Central Congregational UCC**, Atlanta, attended his first meeting of the new board of the United Church Disabilities Ministry in Cleveland. He has been elected to a six year term on the board. Alan is also one of the UCC's representatives at Pathways to Progress, a conference about congregations and those that struggle with mental illness. During that meeting a new steering committee was formed to re-energize the UCC Mental Illness Network. Alan is willing to visit any church in the



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Conference that wants to have discussions about A2A, disabilities, participation in the Mental Illness Network or issues related to service members returning from Iraq or Afghanistan. Contact him at [aroof@secucc.org](mailto:aroof@secucc.org).

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***If there is news that you wish to have shared with others in the Southeast Conference family, please contact Tim at [tdowns@secucc.org](mailto:tdowns@secucc.org).***

*Posted on November 23, 2009*

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## News

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## Campaign for Our Future

### Conference Campaign Progress Report —Transforming Churches Transforming Lives Update



*Indeed living a spiritual life requires a  
change of heart, a conversion.  
Such a conversion may be marked by a sudden inner change,  
or it can take place through a long, quiet process  
of transformation.*  
**Henri J.M. Nouwen**

From the perspective of the gospel, fund-raising is not a response to a crisis. Fund-raising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. Vision and mission are so central to the life of God's people that without vision we perish and without mission we lose our way (Prov. 29:18; 2 Kings 21:1-9). -----Vision brings together needs and resources to meet those needs (Acts 9:1-19). Vision also shows us new directions and opportunities for our mission (Acts 16:9-10). Vision gives us courage to speak when we might want to remain silent (Acts 18:9). Fund-raising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.

When we seek to raise funds we are declaring, "We have a vision that is amazing and exciting. We are inviting you to invest yourself through the resources that God had given you- your energy, your prayers, and your money - in this work to which God has called us." We trust that our vision and mission are like "trees planted by streams of water, which yield fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither" (Ps. 1:3).

The Southeast Conference UCC **"TRANSFORMING CHURCHES - TRANSFORMING LIVES"** Campaign is well under way. The Area Co-Chairs for the Campaign are currently recruiting their Clergy/Lay Teams that will be visiting with all of our churches beginning mid-January, 2010. Our **HONORARY CHAIRPERSON** is Ambassador Andrew Young; the **GENERAL CO-CHAIRPERSONS** are Rev. Susan Mitchell and Mr. Bob Watson; and the **AREA CO-CHAIRPERSONS** are: **ALABAMA / MISSISSIPPI AREA** - Rev. Dorinda Broadnax and Mr. Joseph Thornton; **GEORGIA / SOUTH CAROLINA AREA** - Rev. Susannah Davis and Ms. Bette Graves Thomas; and **TENNESSEE AREA** - Rev. John Gill and John Stewart.

When all Clergy/Lay Teams are in place, we will have a total of approximately 50 volunteers Conference-wide giving of their time, talent and financial support to ensure the success of this Campaign. We are thankful to everyone for their commitment to the Campaign, which will strengthen the future of the Southeast Conference - *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."* (Romans 12:2)

The Kick-Off and Training Meetings are scheduled for January 12, 13 & 14, 2010. The Campaign Steering Committee and the Conference Board of Directors asks each church to cooperate in allowing the team an opportunity to present the program to each church's Governing Body (Consistory, Council, etc.). In order for this Campaign to be successful we are hopeful that each church will consider participating at the **highest** possible level. By spreading the congregation's pledge over a five-year pledge period it will enable each congregation to make a **maximum** contribution with a **minimum** of financial strain. Churches are encouraged to take a serious look at their local needs so as to conduct a combined local church - Conference Campaign. Fund-Raising Workshops are being scheduled for next year.



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